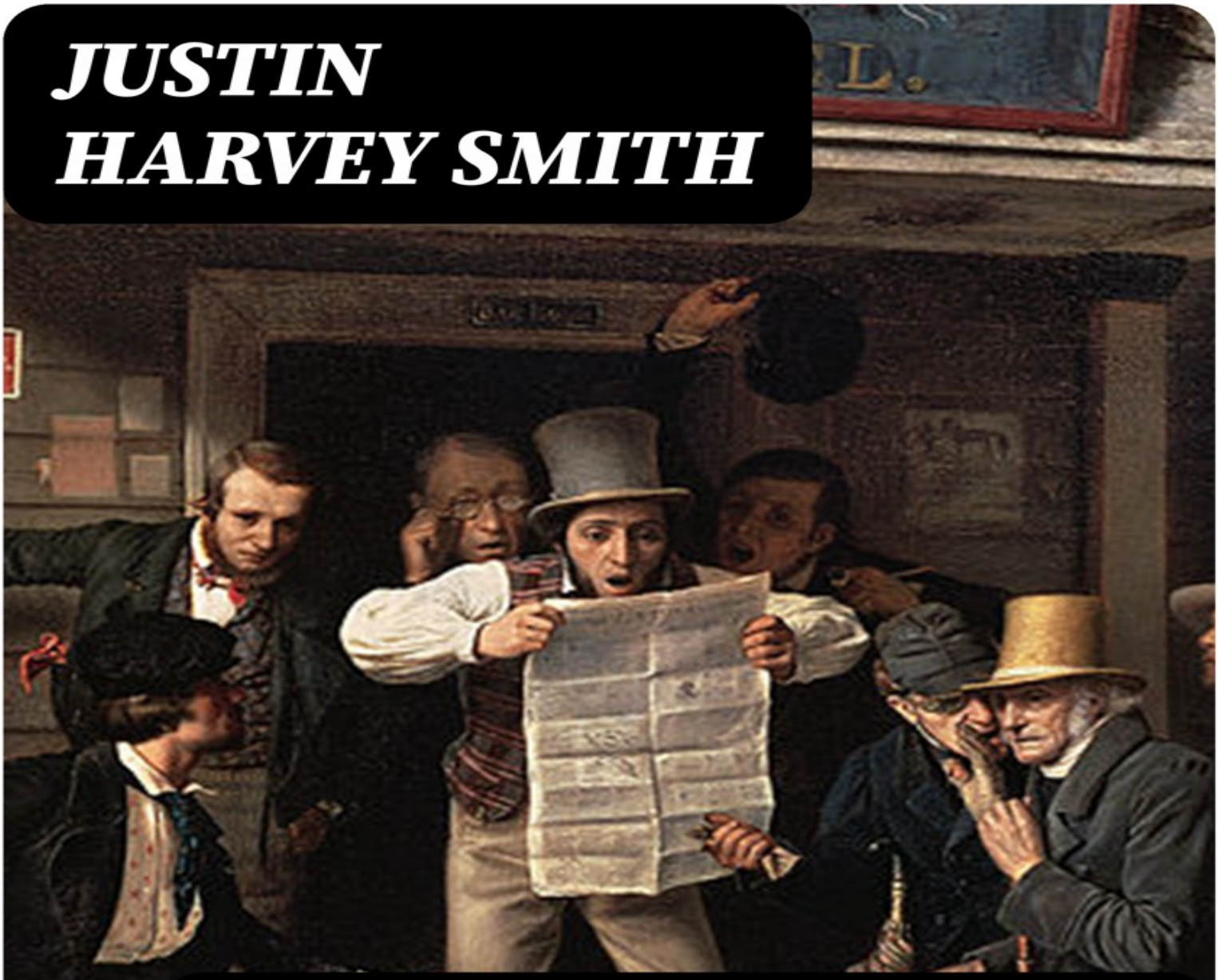
JUSTIN HARVEY SMITH



THE WAR WITH MEXICO (THE COMPLETE TWO-VOLUME EDITION)

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Table of Contents

Volume 1

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

PREFACE

Table of Contents

As every one understands, our conflict with Mexico has been almost entirely eclipsed by the greater wars following it. But in the field of thought mere size does not count for much; and while the number of troops and the lists of casualties give the present subject little comparative importance, it has ample grounds for claiming attention. As a territorial stake New Mexico, Arizona and California were of immense value. National honor was involved, and not a few of the Mexicans thought their national existence imperilled. Some of the diplomatic questions were of the utmost difficulty and interest. The clash of North and South, American and Mexican, produced extraordinary lights and shades, and in both countries the politics that lay behind the military operations made a dramatic and continual by-play. The military conduct of the governments—especially our own—and the behavior of our troops on foreign soil afforded instruction worthy to be pondered. While vast concentrations of forces and complicated tactical operations on a great scale were out of the question, the handling of even small armies at a long distance from home and in a region that was not only foreign but strange, created problems of a peculiar interest and afforded lessons of a peculiar value, such as no earlier or later war of ours has provided; and the examples of courage, honor and heroism exhibited in a conflict not only against man but against

nature merited correct appreciation and lasting remembrance.[1][A]

The warrant for offering another work on the subject rests primarily on the extent and results of the author's investigations. His intention was to obtain substantially all the valuable information regarding it that is in existence, and no effort was spared to reach his end. The appendix of volume II gives a detailed account of the sources. By special authorization from the Presidents of the United States and Mexico it was possible to examine every pertinent document belonging to the two governments. The search extended to the archives of Great Britain, France, Spain, Cuba, Colombia and Peru, those of the American and Mexican states, and those of Mexican cities. The principal libraries here, in Mexico and in Europe, the collections of our historical societies, and papers belonging to many individuals in this country and elsewhere were sifted. It may safely be estimated that the author examined personally more than 100,000 manuscripts bearing upon the subject, more than 1200 books and pamphlets, and also more than 200 periodicals, the most important of which were studied, issue by issue, for the entire period.[B] Almost exclusively the book is based upon first-hand sources, printed matter having been found of little use except for the original material it contains or for data regarding biography, geography, customs, industries and other ancillary subjects.[2]

The author also talked or corresponded with as many of the veterans as he could reach, and he spent more than a year, all told, in Mexico, where he not only studied the chief

battlefields but endeavored, through conversations with Mexicans of all grades and by the aid of foreigners long resident in the country, to become well acquainted with the character and psychology of the people. As the war was fought almost exclusively among them, and its inception, course and results depended in large part upon these factors, the author attaches not a little importance to his opportunities for such personal investigations and to his Mexican data in general.[2]

Probably more than nine tenths of the material used in the preparation of this work is in fact new. No previous writer on the subject had been through the diplomatic and military archives of either belligerent nation, for example. Virtually a still larger percentage is new, for the published documents needed to be compared with the originals. In the printed American reports relating to the battles of September 8 and 13, 1847, for instance, over fifty departures from the manuscripts, that seemed worth noting, were found. Nor did the additional documents prove by any means to supply mere details. A great number of unprinted statements from subordinate officers, who were nearer to the facts than their superiors could be, were discovered. The major official reports needed both to be supplemented and to be corrected. Such reports were in most instances colored more or less, and in some radically distorted, for personal reasons or from a justifiable desire to produce an effect on the subordinates concerned, the army in general, the writer’s government, the enemy, and the public at home and abroad; while, as General Scott stated in orders, unintentional omissions and mistakes were “common.”

Taylor’s account of the battle of May 9, 1846, for example, failed completely to explain his victory. It has been only by obtaining and comparing a large number of statements that approximate verity has been reached. The same has been true of the diplomatic and political aspects of the subject. The reports of the British, French and Spanish ministers residing at Mexico, to cite one illustration, proved indispensable. In reality, therefore, aside from its broader outlines the field presented ample opportunities for study; and while no doubt so extended an investigation included many facts of slight value, La Rochefoucauld was right when he said, “To know things perfectly, one should know them in detail.”[3]

As a particular consequence of this full inquiry, an episode that has been regarded both in the United States and abroad as discreditable to us, appears now to wear quite a different complexion. Such a result, it may be presumed, will gratify patriotic Americans, but the author must candidly admit that he began with no purpose or even thought of reaching it. His view of the war at the outset of his special inquiries coincided substantially with that prevailing in New England, and the subject was taken up simply because he felt convinced that it had not been studied thoroughly. This conviction, indeed, has seemed to be gaining ground rapidly for some time, and hence it is believed that new opinions, resting upon facts, will be acceptable now in place of opinions resting largely upon traditional prejudices and misinformation.

Some might suggest that only a military man could properly write this work. But, in the first place, the author

did not wish to prepare a technical military account of the war. His aim was to offer a correct and complete view of it suitable for all interested in American history, and it will be found that politics, diplomacy and other phases of the subject required as full investigation as did its military aspects.

Secondly, the author took pains to qualify himself for his task. The real difficulty of the commanding general consists in applying the principles of war under complicated, obscure and changeful conditions, and in overcoming “friction” of many sorts. The intellectual side of the art is readily enough understood. “In war everything is very simple,” wrote Clausewitz, the fountainhead of the modern system. “The theory of the great speculative combinations of war is simple enough in itself,” said Jomini; “it only requires intelligence and attentive reflection.” “Strategy is the application of common sense to the conduct of war,” declared Von Moltke. Arnold in his Lectures on Modern History said: “An unprofessional person may, without blame, speak or write on military subjects, and may judge of them sufficiently;” and the eminent military authority, G. F. R. Henderson, endorsed this view. “The theory of war is simple,” wrote another expert, “and there is no reason why any man who chooses to take the trouble to read and reflect carefully on one or two of the acknowledged best books thereon, should not attain to a fair knowledge thereof.” As may be seen from the list of printed sources, the present author—beginning with the volumes recommended by a board of officers to the graduates of the United States Military Academy—did much more than is here proposed.

Finally, during the entire time occupied in writing this work he fortunately enjoyed the advantage of corresponding and occasionally conferring with Brigadier General Oliver L. Spaulding, Jr., of the United States Field Artillery, formerly instructor at the Army Service Schools, Fort Leavenworth, and more recently Assistant Commandant of the School of Fire, Fort Sill, who had distinguished himself not only in the service but as a writer on professional subjects. General Spaulding has kindly discussed with the author such military questions as have arisen, and has read critically all the battle chapters. No responsibility should, however, be attached to him, if a mistake is detected.[4]

A word must be added with reference to the notes. These have been placed at the ends of the volumes because the author believes the best plan will be to read the text of each chapter before looking at the notes that bear upon it, and also in part because he did not wish any one to feel that he was parading his discussions and citations. The notes contain supplementary material designed to make the work a critical as well as a narrative history, and contain also specific references to the sources on which the text is based. These references involved a most annoying problem. When one’s citations are limited in number and proceed in single file, as it were, they can be handled easily. But in the present instance as many as 1800 documents were used for a chapter, not a few of which were cited more than once; and each sentence of the text—to speak broadly—resulted from comparing a number of sources. Under these conditions the usual method would have produced a repellent mass of references, perhaps greater in extent than

the text itself, which would have been very expensive to print and from their multiplicity would have been extremely inconvenient. Where that method appeared feasible it was adopted, but as a rule the references have been grouped by paragraphs or topics. In many cases, however, pains have been taken to indicate in the text itself the basis of important statements, and further hints will be found in the notes. The reader can thus always ascertain in general the basis of the text, and will find specific references wherever the author has thought it likely they would be desired. The special student will wish to look up all the citations bearing on any topic that interests him. No doubt the plan is somewhat unsatisfactory, but after studying the subject for a dozen years the author feels sure that any other would have been more so.[5]

To thank all who kindly assisted the author to obtain material is practically impossible; but a number of names appear in the list of MS. sources, and others must be mentioned here. Without the cordial support of Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Porfirio Diaz, Secretary of State Elihu Root, Minister of Relations Ignacio Mariscal, and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge this history could not have been written; and the author acknowledges with no less pleasure his special obligations to Whitelaw Reid, American Ambassador to Great Britain, Joseph E. Willard, Ambassador to Spain; Henri Vignaux, First Secretary of our embassy at Paris; J. J. Limantour, Minister of Hacienda, Mexico; Major General J. Franklin Bell, Chief of Staff; Major General F. C. Ainsworth, Adj. Gen.; Admiral Alfred T. Mahan; Admiral French E. Chadwick; Brigadier General J. E. Kuhn, Head of

the War College, Washington; Dr. J. Franklin Jameson, Director of the Department of Historical Research, Carnegie Institution; Dr. Gaillard Hunt, Chief of the Division of MSS., Library of Congress; Dr. St. George L. Sioussat, Brown University; Dr. Eugene C. Barker, University of Texas; Dr. Herbert E. Bolton, Professor Frederick J. Teggart and Dr. H. I. Priestley of the University of California; Dr. R. W. Kelsey of Haverford College; Dr. J. W. Jordan, Pennsylvania Historical Society; Dr. Worthington C. Ford, Editor for the Massachusetts Historical Society; Dr. Solon J. Buck of the Minnesota Historical Society; R. D. W. Connor, Secretary of the Historical Commission of North Carolina; Dr. R. P. Brooks of the University of Georgia; Dr. Dunbar Rowland, Director of the Archives and Historical Department of Mississippi; T. M. Owen, Director of the Historical Department of Alabama; Dr. George M. Philips, State Normal School, West Chester, Pa.; Waldo G. Leland, Secretary of the American Historical Association; W. B. Douglas and Miss Stella M. Drumm, Librarian, of the Missouri Historical Society; Dr. Clarence E. Alvord of the University of Illinois and Mrs. Alvord (formerly Miss Idress Head, Librarian of the Missouri Historical Society); Ignacio Molina, Head of the Cartography Section, Department of Fomento, Mexico; Charles W. Stewart, Librarian of the Navy Department; James W. Cheney, long the Librarian of the War Department; Major Gustave R. Lukesh, Director, and Henry E. Haferkorn, Librarian of the United States Engineer School, Washington Barracks; D. C. Brown, Librarian of the Indiana State Library; Victor H. Paltsits, Department of MSS., New York Public Library; W. L. Ostrander of the library at West Point; Lieutenant James R.

Jacobs, 28th United States Infantry; Dr. Katherine J. Gallagher; Dr. Martha L. Edwards. To the widow of Admiral Charles S. Sperry and their son, Professor Charles S. Sperry, the author is particularly indebted for an opportunity to examine important papers left by William L. Marcy. Valuable suggestions were most kindly given by Dr. William A. Dunning of Columbia University and Dr. Davis R. Dewey of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who read portions of the text, by Francis W. Halsey, Esq., of New York, who read nearly all of it, and by Dr. Edward Channing of Harvard University, who was so good as to look over more or less closely all of the proofs. To the helpers not mentioned by name the author begs leave to offer thanks no less sincere.

Finally, the author desires to mention the enterprise and public spirit shown by the publishers in bringing out so expensive a work at this time of uncertainty.

The Century Club, New York
September, 1919.

CONSPECTUS OF EVENTS

Table of Contents

1845		
March.		The United States determines to annex Texas; W. S. Parrott sent to conciliate Mexico.
July.		Texas consents; Taylor proceeds to Corpus Christi.
Oct.	17.	Larkin appointed a confidential agent in California.
Nov.	10.	Slidell ordered to Mexico.
Dec.	20.	Slidell rejected by Herrera.
1846		
Jan.	13.	Taylor ordered to the Rio Grande.
Mar.	8.	Taylor marches from Corpus Christi.
21.		Slidell finally rejected by Paredes.
28.		Taylor reaches the Rio Grande.
Apr.	25.	Thornton attacked.
May	8.	Battle of Palo Alto.
9.		Battle of Resaca de la Palma.
13.		The war bill becomes a law.

June	5.	Kearny’s march to Santa Fe begins.
July	7.	Monterey, California, occupied.
	14.	Camargo occupied.
Aug.	4.	Paredes overthrown.
	7.	First attack on Alvarado.
	13.	Los Angeles, California, occupied.
	16.	Santa Anna lands at Vera Cruz.
	18.	Kearny takes Santa Fe.
	19.	Taylor advances from Camargo.
Sept.	14.	Santa Anna enters Mexico City.
	20–24.	Operations at Monterey, Mex.
	22–23.	Insurrection in California precipitated.
	23.	Wool’s advance from San Antonio begins.
	25.	Kearny leaves Santa Fe for California.
Oct.	8.	Santa Anna arrives at San Luis Potosí.
Oct.	15.	Second attack on Alvarado.
	24.	San Juan Bautista captured by

		Perry.
28.		Tampico evacuated by Parrodi.
29.		Wool occupies Monclova.
Nov.	15.	Tampico captured by Conner.
16.		Saltillo occupied by Taylor.
18.		Scott appointed to command the Vera Cruz expedition.
Dec.	5.	Wool occupies Parras.
6.		Kearny’s fight at San Pascual.
25.		Doniphan’s skirmish at El Brazito.
27.		Scott reaches Brazos Id.
29.		Victoria occupied.
1847		
Jan.	3.	Scott orders troops from Taylor.
8.		Fight at the San Gabriel, Calif.
9.		Fight near Los Angeles, Calif.
11.		Mexican law regarding Church property.
28.		Santa Anna’s march against Taylor begins.
Feb.	5.	Taylor places himself at Agua

		Nueva.
19.		Scott reaches Tampico.
22–23.		Battle of Buena Vista.
27.		Insurrection at Mexico begins.
28.		Battle of Sacramento.
Mar.	9.	Scott lands near Vera Cruz.
29.		Vera Cruz occupied.
30.		Operations in Lower California opened.
Apr.	8.	Scott’s advance from Vera Cruz begins.
18.		Battle of Cerro Gordo; Tuxpán captured by Perry.
19.		Jalapa occupied.
May	15.	Worth enters Puebla.
June	6.	Trist opens negotiations through the British legation.
16.		San Juan Bautista again taken.
Aug.	7.	The advance from Puebla begins.
20.		Battles of Contreras and Churubusco.
Aug. 24–Sept. 7.		Armistice.

Sept.	8.	Battle of Molino del Rey.
13.		Battle of Chapultepec; the “siege” of Puebla begins.
14.		Mexico City occupied.
22.		Peña y Peña assumes the Presidency.
Oct.	9.	Fight at Huamantla.
20.		Trist reopens negotiations.
Nov.	11.	Mazatlán occupied by Shubrick.
1848		
Feb.	2.	Treaty of peace signed.
Mar.	4–5.	Armistice ratified.
10.		Treaty accepted by U. S. Senate.
May	19, 24.	Treaty accepted by Mexican Congress.
30.		Ratifications of the treaty exchanged.
June	12.	Mexico City evacuated.
July	4.	Treaty proclaimed by President Polk.

THE PRONUNCIATION OF SPANISH

Table of Contents

The niceties of the matter would be out of place here, but a few general rules may prove helpful.

A as in English “ah”; *e*, at the end of a syllable, like *a* in “fame,” otherwise like *e* in “let”; *i* like *i* in “machine”; *o*, at the end of a syllable, like *o* in “go,” otherwise somewhat like *o* in “lot”; *u* like *u* in “rude” (but, unless marked with two dots, silent between *g* or *q* and *e* or *i*); *y* like *ee* in “feet.”

C like *k* (but, before *e* and *i,* like [C]*th* in “thin”); *ch* as in “child”; *g* as in “go” (but, before *e* and *i*, like a harsh *h*); *h* silent; *j* like a harsh *h*; *ll* like [D]*lli* in “million”; *ñ* like *ni* in “onion”; *qu* like *k*; *r* is sounded with a vibration (trill) of the tip of the tongue (*rr* a longer and more forcible sound of the same kind); *s* as in “sun”; *x* like *x* in “box” (but, in “México” and a few other names, like Spanish *j*); *z* like [C]*th* in “thin.”

Words bearing no mark of accentuation are stressed on the last syllable if they end in any consonant except *n* or *s*, but on the syllable next to the last if they end in *n*, *s* or a vowel.

MEXICO IN 1919

I
MEXICO AND THE MEXICANS 1800–1845

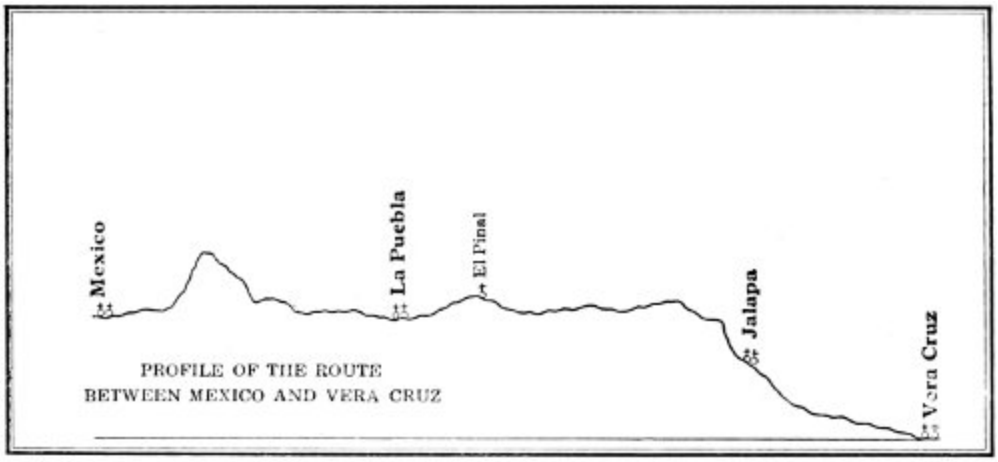
Table of Contents

Mexico, an immense cornucopia, hangs upon the Tropic of Cancer and opens toward the north pole. The distance across its mouth is about the same as that between Boston and Omaha, and the line of its western coast would probably reach from New York to Salt Lake City. Nearly twenty states like Ohio could be laid down within its limits, and in 1845 it included also New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, California and portions of Colorado and Wyoming.[1]

On its eastern side the ground rises almost imperceptibly from the Gulf of Mexico for a distance varying from ten to one hundred miles, and ascends then into hills that soon become lofty ranges, while on the western coast series of cordilleras tower close to the ocean. Between the two mountain systems lies a plateau varying in height from 4000 to 8000 feet, so level—we are told—that one could drive, except where deep gullies make trouble, from the capital of Montezuma to Santa Fe, New Mexico. The country is thus divided into three climatic zones, in one or another of which, it has been said, every plant may be found that grows between the pole and the equator.[1][E]

Except near the United States the coast lands are tropical or semi-tropical; and the products of the soil, which in many quarters is extraordinarily deep and rich, are those which naturally result from extreme humidity and heat. Next

comes an intermediate zone varying in general height from about 2000 to about 4000 feet, where the rainfall, though less abundant than on the coast, is ample, and the climate far more salubrious than below. Here, in view of superb mountains and even of perpetual snows, one finds a sort of eternal spring and a certain blending of the tropical and the temperate zones. Wheat and sugar sometimes grow on the same plantation, and both of them luxuriantly; while strawberries and coffee are not far apart.[1]



PROFILE OF THE ROUTE BETWEEN MEXICO AND VERA CRUZ

The central plateau lacks moisture and at present lacks trees. The greater part of it is indeed a semi-desert, though a garden wherever water can be supplied. During the wet season—June to October—it is covered with wild growths, but the rains merely dig huge gullies or *barrancas*, and almost as soon as they are over, most of the vegetation begins to wither away. The climate of the plateau is quite equable, never hot and never cold. Wheat, Indian corn and maguey—the plant from which *pulque*, the drink of the common people, is made—are the most important products; and at the north great herds of cattle roam. In the

mountains, finally, numberless mines yield large quantities of silver, some gold, and a considerable amount of copper and lead.[1]

The principal cities on the eastern coast are Vera Cruz, the chief seaport, and Tampico, not far south of the Rio Grande River. In the temperate zone between Vera Cruz and Mexico lie Jalapa and Orizaba, and behind Tampico lies Monterey. On the central plateau one finds the capital reposing at an elevation of about eight thousand feet and, about seventy miles toward the southeast, Puebla; while on the other side of the capital are the smaller towns of Querétaro and San Luis Potosí toward the north, and Zacatecas and Chihuahua toward the northwest. In the middle zone of the Pacific slope rises the large city of Guadalajara, capital of Jalisco state; and along the coast below may be found a number of seaports, the most important of which are Guaymas, far to the north, Mazatlán opposite the point of Lower California, San Blas a little farther down, and Acapulco in the south.[1]

THE PEOPLE

Exactly how large the population of Mexico was in 1845 one cannot be sure, and it included quite a number of racial mixtures; but for the present inquiry we may suppose it consisted of 1,000,000 whites, 4,000,000 Indians, and 2,000,000 of mixed white and Indian blood.[2] The Spaniards from Europe, called Gachupines in Mexico, were of two principal classes during her colonial days. Many had been favorites of the Spanish court, or the protégés of such favorites, and had exiled themselves to occupy for a longer or shorter time high and lucrative posts; but by far the greater number were men

who had left home in their youth—poor, but robust, energetic and shrewd—to work their way up. With little difficulty such immigrants found places in mercantile establishments or on the large estates. Merciless in pursuit of gain yet kind to their families, faithful to every agreement, and honest when they could afford to be, they were intrinsically the strongest element of the population, and almost always they became wealthy.[3]

Their sons, poorly educated, lacking the spur of poverty, and finding themselves in a situation where idleness and self-indulgence were their logical habits, commonly took "*Siempre alegre*" (Ever light-hearted) for their motto, and spent their energy in debauchery and gambling. To this result their own fathers, while disgusted with it, usually contributed. Spanish pride revolted at the ladder of subordination by which these very men had climbed. They felt ambitious to make gentlemen of their sons, and some easy position in the army, church or civil service—or, in default of it, idleness—was the career towards which they pointed; and naturally the heirs to their wealth, whose ignoble propensities had prevented them from acquiring efficiency or sense of responsibility, made haste, on getting hold of the paternal wealth, to squander it. If the pure whites, with some exceptions of course, fell into this condition, nothing better could fairly be expected of those who were partly Indian; and before the revolution it was almost universally felt in Spain and among the influential class of colonials themselves, that nothing of much value could be expected of Creoles, as the whites born in Mexico and the half-breeds were generally called. The achievement

of independence naturally tended to increase their self-respect, broaden their views and stimulate their ambition; but the less than twenty-five years that elapsed between 1821 and 1846, when the war between Mexico and the United States began, were not enough to transform principles, reverse traditions and uproot habits.[3]

The pure-blooded Indians—of whom there were many tribes, little affiliated if at all—had changed for the worse considerably since the arrival of the whites. In their struggles against conquest and oppression the most intelligent, spirited and energetic had succumbed, and the rest, deprived of strength, happiness, consolation and even hope, and aware that they existed merely to fill the purses or sate the passions of their masters, had rapidly degenerated. Their natural apathy, reticence and intensity were at the same time deepened. While apparently stupid and indifferent, they were capable of volcanic outbursts. Though fanatically Christian in appearance, they seem to have practiced often a vague nature worship under the names and forms of Catholicism. Indeed they were themselves almost a part of the soil, bound in soul to the spot where they were born; and, although their women could put on silk slippers to honor a church festival and every hut could boast a crucifix or a holy image, they lived and often slept beside their domestic animals with a brutish disregard for dirt.[3]

Legally they had the rights of freemen and were even the wards of the government, and a very few acquired education and property; but as a rule they had to live by themselves in little villages under the headship of lazy,

ignorant caciques and the more effective domination of the priests. As the state levied a small tax upon them and the Church several heavy ones, their scanty earnings melted fast, and if any surplus accumulated they made a fiesta in honor of their patron saint, and spent it in masses, fireworks, drink, gluttony and gambling. When sickness or accident came they had to borrow of the landowner to whose estate they were attached; and then, as they could not leave his employ until the debt had been discharged, they not only became serfs, but in many cases bequeathed their miserable condition to their children. Silent and sad, apparently frail but capable of great exertion, trotting barefooted to and from their huts with their coarse black hair flowing loosely or gathered in two straight braids, watching everything with eyes that seemed fixed on the ground, loving flowers much but a dagger more, fond of melody but preferring songs that were melancholy and wild, always tricky, obstinate, indolent, peevish and careless yet affectionate and hospitable, often extracting a dry humor from life as their donkeys got nourishment from the thistles, they went their wretched ways as patient and inscrutable as the sepoy or the cat—infants with devils inside.[3]

THE CLASSES

At the head of the social world stood a titled aristocracy maintained by the custom of primogeniture. But as the nobles were few in number, and for a long time had possessed no feudal authority, their influence at the period we are studying depended mainly upon their wealth. Next these came aristocrats of other kinds. Some claimed the honor of tracing their pedigree to the conquerors, and with it enjoyed

great possessions; and others had the riches without the descent. The two most approved sources of wealth were the ownership of immense estates and the ownership of productive mines. On a lower level stood certain of the rich merchants, and lower still, if they were lucky enough to gain social recognition, a few of those who acquired property by dealing in the malodorous government contracts. To these must be added in general the high dignitaries of the church, the foreign ministers, the principal generals and statesmen and the most notable doctors and lawyers. Such was the upper class.[4]

A sort of middle class included the lesser professional men, prelates, military officers and civil officials, journalists, a few teachers, business men of importance and some fairly well-to-do citizens without occupations. Of small farms and small mines there were practically none, and the inferior clergy signified little. The smaller importing and wholesale merchants came to be almost entirely British, French and German soon after independence was achieved, and the retailers were mostly too low in the scale to rank anywhere. The case of those engaged in the industries was even more peculiar. Working at a trade seemed menial to the Spaniard, especially since the idea of labor was associated with the despised Indians, and most of the half-breeds and Indians lacked the necessary intelligence. Skilled workers at the trades were therefore few, and these few mostly high-priced foreigners. Articles of luxury could be had but not comforts; pastries and ices but not good bread; saddles covered with gold and embroidery, but not serviceable wagons; and the